



# *Friendly Witnesses*

the worlds of WARREN SONBERT

October 29–December 17, 2000  
Sundays at 1 and 3:30 p.m.  
Phyllis Wattis Theater  
San Francisco Museum of Modern Art

The San Francisco Museum of Modern Art's commitment to film as an artist's medium first began in 1936 with the presentation of motion pictures as a modern art form. In 1946 this interest was expanded into the popular *Art in Cinema* program, which lasted until 1978 when, due to space restrictions at the Museum's old building, it was discontinued. With the establishment of a new museum facility equipped with a theater for film and video screenings, SFMOMA renews its commitment to the presentation of experimental film, historic surveys, and thematic exhibitions.

This presentation of *Friendly Witnesses: The Worlds of Warren Sonbert* was organized by Gartenberg Media Enterprises in conjunction with the San Francisco Museum of Modern Art. The preservation and exhibition of Sonbert's work was originally organized in cooperation with the Estate Project for Artists with AIDS, the Academy Film Archive, and the Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum.

Special thanks to the following individuals and organizations for their assistance with the SFMOMA presentation of this program: Jon Gartenberg, exhibition guest curator; Ascension Serrano, Estate for Warren Sonbert; Patrick Moore, The Estate Project for Artists with AIDS; John Hanhardt, Guggenheim Museum; Contemporary Extension, an auxiliary of SFMOMA; Dominic Angerame and staff of Canyon Cinema; Steve Anker and Steve Polta, SF Cinemateque; MoMA, NY; Gerard Malanga; Alan Bernheimer; Robert Beavers, The Temenos Project, Inc.; Brian Fox and Peter Langs of Swank Motion Pictures; Ian Birnie, LACMA; Ray Regis, North Carolina School of the Arts; Tobias Jelinek, Gartenberg Media Enterprises, Inc.; and SFMOMA staff members Suzanne Feld, Carol Nakaso, Randy Nordschow and Paul Clipson.

Benjamin Weil,  
Curator of Media Arts

## Restoring the Legacy of Warren Sonbert's Filmmaking Enterprise

Jon Gartenberg, Guest Curator

*Friendly Witnesses: The Worlds of Warren Sonbert* inaugurates a public reassessment of the creative and cultural legacies of experimental filmmaker Warren Sonbert (1947–1995). This postmortem reevaluation of Sonbert's career is made possible under the auspices of the Estate Project for Artists with AIDS. In late 1996, Patrick Moore, director of the Estate Project, approached me about developing a pilot project to document the work of artists in the experimental and independent film community who had been afflicted with this deadly disease. We established a far-reaching initiative, involving the preservation, distribution, and exhibition of each filmmaker's work. Throughout this undertaking, we have endeavored, first and foremost, to acknowledge experimental filmmakers as artists, working within a larger creative and cultural sphere. We have also examined each filmmaker's entire body of work as a coherent entity rather than as a collection of individual films, a perspective that provides a greater appreciation for the artist's creative development and legacy of achievements.

Through this initiative, all of the internegatives from Sonbert's camera originals and original prints have been preserved by the Academy Film Archive in Los Angeles. The films shown in this exhibition are new prints struck from these internegatives. The Estate Project has arranged for these prints to be distributed by Canyon Cinema in San Francisco. Finally, this exhibition, another aspect of the Estate Project's undertaking, makes Sonbert's creative legacy available to the public.

Sonbert has typically been regarded as an avant-garde "diarist" filmmaker, yet a look at his creative output as a whole suggests that this is an oversimplified view of his work. A chronological reassessment of his entire filmmaking career—from his rarely-seen first film, *Amphetamine* (1966), made when he was a student at New York University, through *Whiplash* (1995; completed posthumously in 1997 according to the filmmaker's instructions)—in conjunction with a study of the artist's writings and personal papers strongly suggests that Sonbert warrants a more substantial place in the larger artistic and cultural universe.

In addition to his substantial filmmaking enterprise, Sonbert was a prolific theoretician and critic. He possessed a keen intellect, and was both probing and playful in his revelation of the fundamental interplay between all the creative arts, including experimental and commercial film, rock and classical music, opera and poetry, and literature and painting. A survey of his estate's papers has uncovered extensive evidence to support this view. Among his papers are unpublished documents, including miscellaneous letters and diaries, travel itineraries, and detailed shot lists from his outtake reels containing annotations about film stocks, film speeds, and the tonal quality of individual images; published reviews of international opera performances, music recordings, and the Hollywood cinema in such newspapers and journals as *The Bay Area Reporter* and *The Advocate*; transcripts of lectures he presented at the Pacific Film Archive, the San Francisco Art Institute, and other cinematheques and museums about his films in relation to the works of Stan Brakhage and Sergei Eisenstein, Douglas Sirk and Alfred Hitchcock, and Mozart and Elliot Carter; a screenplay adaptation of Richard Strauss's opera *Capriccio* (which Sonbert set in France in 1770, Germany in 1942, and contemporary New York); and an ongoing dialogue with both the San Francisco Bay Area poets and the New York art scene.

My first encounter with Sonbert occurred more than twenty years ago, when he was teaching film at Bard College and I was a curator in the Museum of Modern Art's Department of Film. I was involved in acquiring experimental films for the museum's permanent collection, and when I told him of my desire to purchase a print of *Amphetamine*, he flatly turned me down, insisting that the film no longer represented the kind of work he was making. He told me that I would be obliged to acquire his most recent film, *Rude Awakening* (1976). I now see that our initial contact etched the nature of our relationship in the ensuing years. It also defines the creative tension that exists between the avant-garde film artist and the film archivist: whereas the experimental filmmaker's greatest need is to sustain the creation of new works, the archivist's objective is to recover the



Short Fuse (1992)

artist's past creations in order to provide a context for the appreciation of his or her oeuvre.

The restoration of Sonbert's films has been complicated by his working process. In 1968, he began to cut apart the camera originals of his early films—including *The Bad and the Beautiful* (1967), *Connection* (1967), *Ted and Jessica* (1967), *The Tenth Legion* (1967), and *Holiday* (1968)—in order to incorporate the footage into an ever-evolving work-in-progress, which ultimately resulted in *Carriage Trade* (1972). Yet in systematically restoring Sonbert's oeuvre, we have discovered that he had struck reversal prints for most of his early works before he edited the camera originals, so we were fortunately able to preserve almost his entire filmmaking legacy.

The archivist's task has been further complicated by the filmographies that Sonbert prepared for the innumerable exhibitions of his work in the United States and abroad, in which he tended to eliminate mention of certain of his early films. In addition, while a number of films he made between 1966 and 1968 were first distributed by the Film-makers' Cooperative in New York, when Sonbert transferred the circulation of his films to Canyon Cinema, his only early films listed for

rental were *Where Did Our Love Go?* (1966) and *Hall of Mirrors* (1966). Primarily, he showed and promoted his work from the post-*Carriage Trade* period.

Shown in this exhibition for the first time in thirty years are films that were heretofore thought to have been "lost" from his oeuvre, including *The Tenth Legion*, restored in its entirety with its original soundtrack; a fragment from *Ted and Jessica*<sup>1</sup>, a twin-screen film that was influenced in its formal structure by Andy Warhol's *The Chelsea Girls* (1966); and *The Tuxedo Theatre* (1968), a recently uncovered early version of *Carriage Trade*, found at the London Filmmakers' Co-op. These previously lost works—along with Sonbert's outtake reels (containing the raw footage from which he assembled his completed films), which have provided new insight into Sonbert's creative process—are the basis for a reevaluation of his career. Their restoration permits us to more systematically document and trace Sonbert's evolution from a fledgling student filmmaker unfamiliar with the operation of a motion-picture camera<sup>2</sup> to an accomplished artist who intentionally incorporated filmmaking flaws (such as under- and overexposed images and flares and exposed leader at the end of film rolls) into the fabric of his style.

#### Notes

This and my other texts in this brochure were originally written to accompany the Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum presentation of this program and appear here in slightly modified form.

1. Based on subsequent screenings of, and discussions about, this fragment with the original stars of the film, Ted Ostroff and Jessica Green, we cannot now be sure that this attempted partial reconstruction of the film is accurate, even though this reel was marked *Ted and Jessica* when found in Sonbert's estate. However, since the conceptualization and practice of making twin-screen films was central to Sonbert's evolution as a master practitioner of montage, we felt it was important to include this attempted restoration in the program.

2. Wendy Appel, who worked on *Amphetamine* with Sonbert, states that both were relatively unfamiliar with a motion-picture camera at the time. Interview with the author, 2 May 1998.

## The Worlds of Warren Sonbert

Jon Gartenberg, Guest Curator

Warren Sonbert began making films in 1966, as a student at New York University's film school. His earliest films, in which he captured the spirit of his generation, were inspired first by the university milieu and then by the denizens of the Warhol art scene, including superstars René Ricard and Gerard Malanga. In these loosely structured narratives, Sonbert boldly experimented with the relationship between filmmaker and protagonists through extensively choreographed handheld camera movements within each shot. The mood of these films was further modulated by chiaroscuro effects, achieved primarily through natural lighting (in both interior and outdoor shots), combined with variations in the raw film stock and the exposure and the use of rock-and-roll music on the soundtrack.

Sonbert's early films were shown at the Film-Makers' Cinematheque and at the Bleecker Street Cinema in New York, and he immediately received wide critical acclaim, including reviews in *The Village Voice*, *The Independent Film Journal*, and *The New York Free Press*. A reviewer in *Variety* wrote: "Probably not since Andy Warhol's 'The Chelsea Girls' had its first showing at the Cinematheque . . . almost a year and a half ago has an 'underground' film event caused as much curiosity and interest in N.Y.'s non-underground world as did four days of showings of the complete films of Warren Sonbert at the Cinematheque's new location on Wooster St. last weekend (Thurs.-Sun., Jan. 25-28). And as before, the crowds (many turned away each night) were attributed to press reports."<sup>1</sup>

In the late 1960s, as Sonbert began to carry his Bolex camera on international trips, his cinematic strategy shifted to incorporate footage from these travels together with sections from his earlier films. This process resulted in his first major epic, *Carriage Trade*.

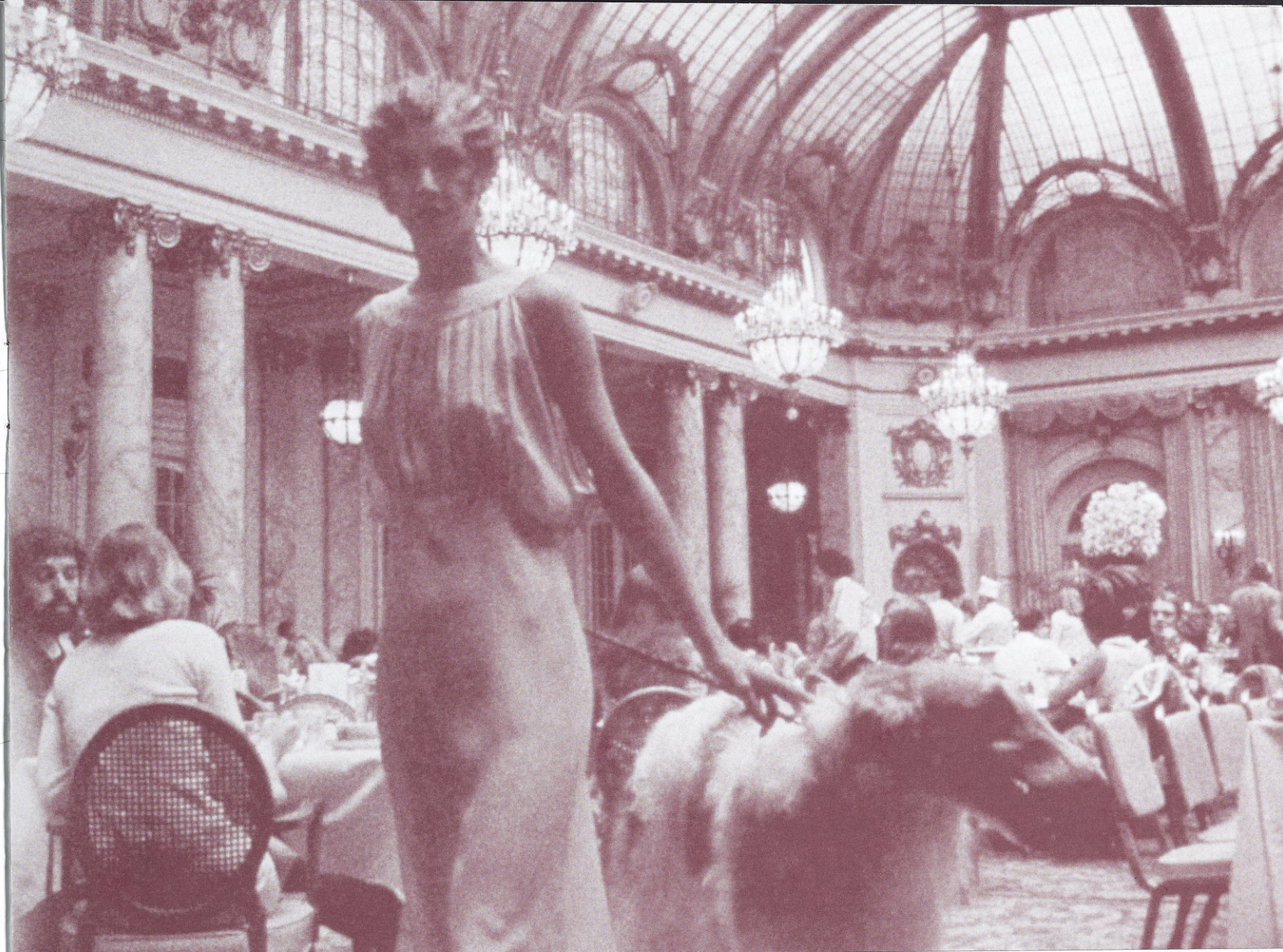
Sonbert's works from this period show him perfecting his ability to transform his early experiments into the more accomplished works of a mature artist by using his own distinct brand of "polyvalent montage," a

technique in which each shot "can be combined with surrounding shots along potentially many dimensions. That is, this style begins in the realization that a shot may either match or contrast with adjacent, preceding or succeeding shots in virtue of color, subject, shape, shade, texture, the screen orientation of object, the direction of camera or object movement, or even the stasis thereof."<sup>2</sup>

He built upon his early experiments in camera movement, lighting, and framing to create brilliantly edited masterworks that encompass not only his New York milieu, but the larger sphere of human activity. In these films he commented on such contemporary issues as art and industry, news reportage and its effect on our lives, and the interrelationship between the creative arts. *Short Fuse* (1992), for example, incorporates themes from the Strauss opera *Capriccio*, while *Noblesse Oblige* (1981) is patterned after Douglas Sirk's *Tarnished Angels* (1958). Like *Tarnished Angels*, *Noblesse Oblige* contains themes of flying and falling, and the way media reportage shapes public perceptions of people and events; it also contains shots of *Tarnished Angels* on video monitors and of Sirk himself conversing in a café.

During this period, Sonbert was developing a finely balanced system of film production. He would create his domestic and international travel itineraries based on operas he was planning to review as a professional critic, then he would arrange simultaneous showings of his films in the cities he would be visiting. On these extended journeys, often lasting weeks or months, Sonbert shot footage for new projects. Upon his return to San Francisco, he would assemble these shots on large outtake reels. These often incorporate a succession of shots of the same subject, revealing that he frequently filmed multiple takes, akin to practices in Hollywood cinema. After composing a reel, he would create a detailed typewritten shot list recording its contents.

During the years immediately preceding his death, Sonbert channeled all his energy into making his final film, *Whiplash*. Never discussing the nature of his



*Friendly Witness* (1989)

affliction even with his closest friends, he tirelessly shot footage on a final trip to Spain in March 1994. (*Whiplash*'s bullfight imagery is from this footage.) On his return to the United States, his vision and motor skills impaired, he gave his companion, Ascension Serrano, detailed instructions about the assembly of specific shots and the music to be used as a counterpoint to the images. Before his death in 1995, Sonbert asked filmmaker Jeff Scher (a former student of his at Bard) to complete the film, a process that involved literally trimming the ends of various shots that Sonbert had already assembled so that the imagery would conform to the rhythm of the music that he had selected. Scher's work was extremely consonant with Sonbert's working process: an inspection of Sonbert's outtake reels reveals that he had spliced back into these reels individual frames that he had removed while refining the editing of each of his films.

*Whiplash*, which had its world premiere at the New York Film Festival on September 30, 1997, is a compelling, multilayered portrayal of the filmmaker's struggle to maintain equilibrium in his physical self,

his perceptual reality, and the world of friends and family around him. In it, Sonbert articulated the ideas and values for which he intended to be remembered. Most important among these is the theme of love between couples, a subject he had explored in his earliest films, including *Amphetamine* and *The Bad and the Beautiful*.

Sonbert was able to transform, in seemingly effortless fashion, globetrotting diaristic footage into exquisitely modulated visual symphonies of ritual, performance, and suggestion. As he perfected his unique brand of montage from one film to the next, he used this editing technique to engage the spectator in the process of viewing his films. By doing so, he wished "to juggle disparate reactions in a struggle against viewer complacency and easily derived judgements."<sup>3</sup> His model in this was not the "knee-jerk" reaction produced by Eisensteinian montage, but rather the "images and editing riffs of poetry" in Dziga Vertov's *The Man with the Movie Camera* (1929).<sup>4</sup> Sonbert's strategy of actively engaging the spectator in the multifaceted readings of his individual works is perhaps his most enduring legacy.

#### Notes

1. Byro, "Still NYU Student, Warren Sonbert's Wooster St. B.O.," *Variety*, 7 February 1968, 17.
2. Noel Carroll, quoted in Jon Gartenberg, "The Avant-Garde: Ernie Gehr & Warren Sonbert," *Films in Review* 33, no. 6 (June-July 1982): 370.
3. William Graves, written notes for eulogy given at Sonbert's memorial service, San Francisco, 1995.
4. Warren Sonbert, "Point of View," *Spiral*, no. 1 (October 1984): 5.

## Films in the Series

Jon Gartenberg, Guest Curator

### Program 1

Transformations of Style: From Mise-en-Scène to Montage

*The Tenth Legion*, 1967, Warren Sonbert; 30 min.

*The Tuxedo Theatre*, 1968, Warren Sonbert, silent; 21 min.

*The Tenth Legion*, which was originally thought to have been destroyed by Sonbert while he was making *Carriage Trade*, stylistically exemplifies the artist's masterful use of a constantly moving handheld camera (as it trails the college-age protagonists in a choreographed fashion) and of chiaroscuro lighting effects in interior scenes.

Beginning in 1968, Sonbert abandoned his earlier filmmaking style, which had brought him such notoriety in the public press while he was still a teenager. He began using his handheld Bolex camera to enlarge his field of vision beyond New York, recording footage as he traveled around the world. *The Tuxedo Theatre*, also recently rediscovered, offers heretofore largely unseen direct evidence of Sonbert's first steps in developing his unique style of editing, which resulted in *Carriage Trade*.

### Program 2

Intimate Couplings

*The Bad and the Beautiful*, 1967, Warren Sonbert; 34 min.

*Ted and Jessica*, 1967, Warren Sonbert; 4 min. (fragment)

*Honor and Obey*, 1988, Warren Sonbert, silent; 21 min.

One of the most profound themes coursing throughout Sonbert's work is that of love between couples in all its pitfalls and perfect moments. To express this theme between his protagonists onscreen as well as in the relationship between his ever-loving handheld camera and the human subjects in his field of vision, Sonbert employed diverse cinematic strategies, including in-camera editing (*The Bad and the Beautiful*), twin-screen effects (*Ted and Jessica*)<sup>1</sup>, and montage of discrete shots filmed in distinct spaces (*Honor and Obey*).

*The Tenth Legion* (1967)



### Program 3

Early Influences: Andy Warhol and Gerard Malanga

*Where Did Our Love Go?*, 1966, Warren Sonbert; 15 min.

*Hall of Mirrors*, 1966, Warren Sonbert; 7 min.

*In Search of the Miraculous*, 1967, Gerard Malanga; 30 min.

*Vinyl*, 1965, Andy Warhol, b/w; 66 min.

As a film student at New York University in the mid-1960s, Sonbert incorporated the avant-garde art scene of Warhol and his contemporaries into his filmmaking enterprise. This program pays tribute to these Warhol-era influences. *Where Did Our Love Go?* includes scenes from Warhol's Factory and the art-gallery world, and *Hall of Mirrors* features Warhol's superstars René Ricard and Gerard Malanga in more private and reflective moments. Sonbert's films are in vivid counterpoint to Warhol's stylized presentation of performance and identity in *Vinyl*. Particular attention in this program is paid to Malanga, with whom Sonbert collaborated in 1967, shooting footage for and briefly appearing in Malanga's film *In Search of the Miraculous*.

### Program 4

Sonbert's Queer Aesthetic

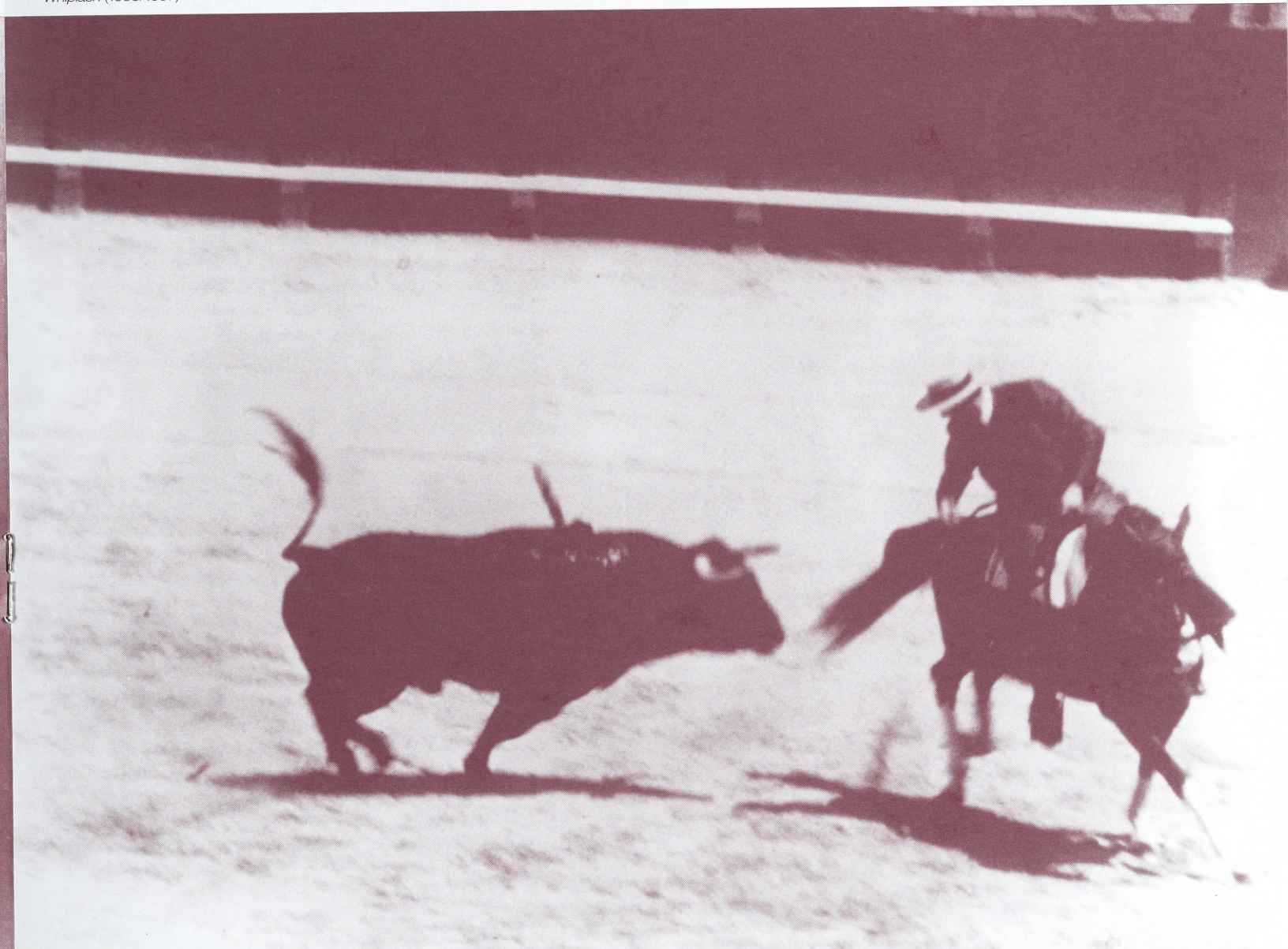
*Amphetamine*, 1966, Warren Sonbert and Wendy Appel, b/w; 10 min.

*Noblesse Oblige*, 1981, Warren Sonbert, silent; 25 min.

*Whiplash*, 1995, completed posthumously in 1997, Warren Sonbert; 20 min.

Of the many creative and cultural universes inhabited by Sonbert, none was perhaps more acutely experienced yet least publicly acknowledged than his homosexual identity and affliction with AIDS. This program examines Sonbert's relationship to the gay universe, beginning with his provocative and playful first film, *Amphetamine*, which depicts young men shooting amphetamines and making love in the era of sex, drugs, and rock-and-roll. The program continues with *Noblesse Oblige*, a masterfully edited work that weaves in imagery of protests in San Francisco following the murders of Mayor George Moscone and Supervisor Harvey Milk at the hands of Dan White. It culminates with *Whiplash*, his elegiac meditation on his own mortality, a film that was completed posthumously according to Sonbert's instructions.

*Whiplash* (1995/1997)



## Films in the Series

### Program 5

Gregory Markopoulos as Mentor, Stan Brakhage as Hero

*Rude Awakening*, 1976, Warren Sonbert, silent; 36 min.

*The Riddle of Lumen*, 1972, Stan Brakhage, silent; 17 min.

*Mothlight*, 1963, Stan Brakhage, silent; 4 min.

*Twice a Man*, 1963, Gregory Markopoulos; 49 min.

This program addresses Sonbert's relationship to two filmmakers, Stan Brakhage and Gregory Markopoulos, both of whom deeply affected the way he thought about film and the evolution of his style. In the works of Brakhage, Sonbert saw the incorporation of the materiality of film (as in *Mothlight*), the treatment of light in relationship to the lens and the objects being filmed (as in *The Riddle of Lumen*), and the use of a handheld camera as a liberating device and means through which the filmmaker could express his subjective state of being.

Sonbert was befriended by filmmaker Gregory Markopoulos while he was still a teenager. Sonbert stated, "I was [Markopoulos's] protégé for a while and he did open up this entire world of films for me."<sup>2</sup> *Twice a Man* exemplifies Markopoulos's repetition of the film frame in order to reflect the filmmaker's subjective experience. Sonbert adopted and modified this technique, taking the shot rather than the frame as his basic unit; films such as *Rude Awakening* are structured as an accumulation of disparate images, some of which are repeated.

### Program 6

Filmed Images as Found Footage: Stanzas of Music

*Carriage Trade*, 1972, Warren Sonbert, silent; 61 min.

*Short Fuse*, 1992, Warren Sonbert; 37 min.

After successfully integrating the language of film—composition, lighting, and editing—into a unique formal vision in *Carriage Trade*, in subsequent films Sonbert embedded these stylistic devices within a moral universe in which he provided cinematographic commentary on larger social issues. He frequently theorized about the relationship of film to other art forms, particularly music. He analogized the notes, chords, and tone clusters to the progression of shots in film. The shot was the building block upon which Sonbert created the musical rhythms of his films.

Sonbert published excerpts of his feature-film screenplay adaptation of Strauss's *Capriccio*, his favorite opera, in 1986. *Short Fuse*, completed six years later, can be seen as a return to *Capriccio*'s themes, including "Nazism and eroticism, beauty and force, detail and structure."<sup>3</sup> Underscoring a question raised by *Capriccio*—whether in opera the music or the drama takes priority—*Short Fuse* is replete with a soundtrack that competes with the film's visuals, prompting the viewer to ask whether the music or the imagery is more significant.

### Program 7

Cases in Point: Sonbert's Creative Interaction with Experimental Filmmakers Abigail Child, Nathaniel Dorsky, and Jeff Scher

*Friendly Witness*, 1989, Warren Sonbert; 22 min.

*Hours for Jerome, Part 2*, 1966–82, Nathaniel Dorsky, silent; 25 min.

*Reasons to be Glad*, 1980, Jeff Scher; 4 min.

*Mercy*, 1989, Abigail Child; 10 min.

*Postcards from Warren*, 1999, Jeff Scher; 1 min.  
(San Francisco premiere)

*Warren*, 1991, Jeff Scher; 3 min.

*Friendly Witness*, Sonbert's first sound film in more than twenty years, serves as a counterpoint to the works of a selection of experimental filmmakers with whom Sonbert engaged in an extended dialogue about filmmaking.

Dorsky appears in Sonbert's films, and similar imagery courses through both filmmakers' works. But whereas Sonbert accelerated the pacing of his montage, Dorsky extended the pacing of his shots, allowing a more lingering contemplation of his images. Sonbert wrote of Dorsky's *Hours for Jerome* that it was "simply the most beautifully photographed film that I've ever seen. . . . Here cinema enters the realm of the compassionate; capturing the eye and the mind in ways unlike the predictable arena of structural film."<sup>4</sup>

In *Mercy*, Child brilliantly interweaves found footage and freshly shot material, counterpointing "the public and private visions of technological and romantic invention."<sup>5</sup> The film's iconography of explosions, street scenes, amusement-park rides, marches, and couples kissing; its patterns of repeated imagery; and its play of the materiality of film—including scratches, varying exposures, and the combined use of black-and-white and color—evoke the worlds Sonbert created in his films. Child also extends Sonbert's investigation into the relationship between music and image, incorporating radically edited sound material that parallels in density and intensity her filmed images.

Scher, who has made experimental films, trailers, advertising films, and a narrative feature film (*Prisoners of Inertia*, 1989), is best known for his fecund creativity in the animation process. In *Reasons to be Glad*, thousands of hand drawings shown in succession create a Sonbert-like world of gesture and suggestion: a circus performer on a tightrope, a man splitting wood, a woman baking. *Postcards from Warren* pays affectionate homage to Sonbert's globetrotting endeavors by creating an original collage from postcards that Sonbert sent to Scher over the course of their more than twenty-year friendship and collaboration. The film expands upon Sonbert's description of *Carriage Trade* as "a jig-saw puzzle of postcards to produce varied displaced effects."<sup>6</sup> Finally, in Scher's *Warren*, Sonbert's protégé deftly turns the observational tables on his mentor in a simultaneously humorous and nostalgic fashion.



*A Woman's Touch* (1983)

## Program 8

Sonbert and Hitchcock:  
Narrative from a Woman's Point of View

*A Woman's Touch*, 1983, Warren Sonbert, silent; 22 min.  
*Marnie*, 1964, Alfred Hitchcock, 35mm; 129 min.

Sonbert was known not only for his films and opera reviews; he was also a noted film critic. His writings about feature films are among his more extraordinarily profound and insightful creations. In them, he expressed admiration for a pantheon of American directors working within the studio system, including Alfred Hitchcock, Nicholas Ray, and Douglas Sirk. He deeply admired Sirk's ability to expose the "hollow cupidity and superficiality . . . of middle class ideals,"<sup>7</sup> and to accentuate the forces of destruction rent upon the nuclear family structure of the 1950s. An indication of his enthusiasm for Hitchcock was his reputation for conducting tours for visiting friends, associates, and filmmakers of the locations around San Francisco used by Hitchcock while filming *Vertigo* (1958). In 1986, Sonbert gave a lecture at the Pacific Film Archive, in which he spoke of the "schizophrenic split" in *Marnie* between "images of [en]closure and escape,"<sup>8</sup> representing the interplay between male domination and female independence; Sonbert paralleled these conceits in his own film *A Woman's Touch*.

## Notes

1. Based on subsequent screenings of, and discussions about, this fragment with the original stars of the film, Ted Ostroff and Jessica Green, we cannot now be sure that this attempted partial reconstruction of the film is accurate, even though this reel was marked *Ted and Jessica* when found in Sonbert's estate. However, since the conceptualization and practice of making twin-screen films was central to Sonbert's evolution as a master practitioner of montage, we felt it was important to include this attempted restoration in the program.
2. "Warren Sonbert Interviewed by David Ehrenstein, December 1978," *Film Culture*, nos. 70-71 (1983): 191.
3. William Graves, written notes for eulogy given at Sonbert's memorial service, San Francisco, 1995.
4. Warren Sonbert, written notes for an entry in the 1992 Canyon Cinema catalogue.
5. Abigail Child, program note for "Small Retrospective," Anthology Film Archives, New York, April 1994.
6. Warren Sonbert, program note for screening of *Carriage Trade*, New American Filmmakers Series, Whitney Museum of American Art, New York, 11-17 October 1973.
7. Warren Sonbert, program note for "Douglas Sirk and the Melodrama: Notes by Filmmakers on Sirk," Pacific Film Archive, Berkeley, 3 April-12 June 1975.
8. Warren Sonbert, "Hitchcock's *Marnie*" (1985), written notes for a lecture given at Pacific Film Archive, Berkeley, 8 July 1986.

## Premiere

Thursday, October 26

7 p.m. Program 1

### **Transformations of Style: From Mise-en-Scène to Montage**

*The Tenth Legion*, 1967, Warren Sonbert, 30 min.

*The Tuxedo Theatre*, 1968, Warren Sonbert, silent, 21 min.

## October

1 p.m. Program 1

### **Transformations of Style: From Mise-en-Scène to Montage**

*The Tenth Legion*, 1967, Warren Sonbert, 30 min.

*The Tuxedo Theatre*, 1968, Warren Sonbert, silent, 21 min.

2 p.m. Panel discussion

### **Themes and Variations: Warren Sonbert's Approach to Narrative**

**29** Moderated by SFMOMA Curator of Media Arts Benjamin Weil, featuring guest curator Jon Gartenberg, poet Alan Bernheimer, SF Cinematheque Director Steve Anker, former SFMOMA Chief Conservator and Sonbert film participant Will Shank, and music critic Paul Hertelendy. Please call the Media Arts department at 415/357-4130 for details.

4:30 p.m. Program 2

### **Intimate Couplings**

*The Bad and the Beautiful*, 1967, Warren Sonbert, 34 min.

*Ted and Jessica*, 1967, Warren Sonbert, 4 min. (fragment)

*Honor and Obey*, 1988, Warren Sonbert, silent, 21 min.

## Screening Schedule

Sundays

*Friendly Witness* (1989)



1 p.m. Program 3

**Early Influences: Andy Warhol and Gerard Malanga**

*Where Did Our Love Go*, 1966, Warren Sonbert, 15 min.  
*Hall of Mirrors*, 1966, Warren Sonbert, 7 min.  
*In Search of the Miraculous*, 1967, Gerard Malanga, 30 min.  
*Vinyl*, 1965, Andy Warhol, b/w; 66 min.

5

3:30 p.m. Program 4

**Sonbert's Queer Aesthetic**

*Amphetamine*, 1966, Warren Sonbert and Wendy Appel, b/w, 10 min.  
*Noblesse Oblige*, 1981, Warren Sonbert, silent, 25 min.  
*Whiplash*, 1995/1997, Warren Sonbert, 20 min.

1 p.m. Program 5

**Gregory Markopoulos as Mentor,  
 Stan Brakhage as Hero**

*Rude Awakening*, 1976, Warren Sonbert, silent, 36 min.  
*The Riddle of Lumen*, 1972, Stan Brakhage, silent, 17 min.  
*Mothlight*, 1963, Stan Brakhage, silent, 4 min.  
*Twice a Man*, 1963, Gregory Markopoulos, 49 min.

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3:30 p.m. Program 2

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*Ted and Jessica*, 1967, Warren Sonbert, 4 min. (fragment)  
*Honor and Obey*, 1988, Warren Sonbert, silent, 21 min.

1 p.m. Program 6

**Filmed Images as Found Footage: Stanzas of Music**

*Carriage Trade*, 1972, Warren Sonbert, silent, 61 min.  
*Short Fuse*, 1992, Warren Sonbert, 37 min.

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3:30 p.m. Program 5

**Gregory Markopoulos as Mentor,  
 Stan Brakhage as Hero**

*Rude Awakening*, 1976, Warren Sonbert, silent, 36 min.  
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1 p.m. Program 7

**Cases in Point: Sonbert's Creative Interaction  
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3

3:30 p.m. Program 6

**Filmed Images as Found Footage: Stanzas of Music**

*Carriage Trade*, 1972, Warren Sonbert, silent, 61 min.  
*Short Fuse*, 1992, Warren Sonbert, 37 min.

1 p.m. Program 8

**Sonbert and Hitchcock:  
 Narrative from a Woman's Point of View**

*A Woman's Touch*, 1983, Warren Sonbert, silent, 22 min.  
*Marnie*, 1964, Alfred Hitchcock, 35mm, 129 min.

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3:30 p.m. Program 7

**Cases in Point: Sonbert's Creative Interaction  
 with Experimental Filmmakers Abigail Child,  
 Nathaniel Dorsky, and Jeff Scher**

*Friendly Witness*, 1989, Warren Sonbert, 22 min.  
*Hours for Jerome, Part 2*, 1966-82, Nathaniel Dorsky, silent, 25 min.  
*Reasons to Be Glad*, 1980, Jeff Scher, 4 min.  
*Mercy*, 1989, Abigail Child, 10 min.  
*Postcards from Warren*, 1999, Jeff Scher, 1 min.  
*Warren*, 1991, Jeff Scher, 3 min.

1 p.m. Program 4

**Sonbert's Queer Aesthetic**

*Amphetamine*, 1966, Warren Sonbert and Wendy Appel, b/w, 10 min.  
*Noblesse Oblige*, 1981, Warren Sonbert, silent, 25 min.  
*Whiplash*, 1995/1997, Warren Sonbert, 20 min.

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3:30 p.m. Program 8

**Sonbert and Hitchcock:  
 Narrative from a Woman's Point of View**

*A Woman's Touch*, 1983, Warren Sonbert, silent, 22 min.  
*Marnie*, 1964, Alfred Hitchcock, 35mm, 129 min.

All works are 16mm film, color, and sound unless otherwise noted.  
 Schedule is subject to change. Call 415/357-4130 for final details.  
 Films are free with museum admission.

## Acknowledgments

Jon Gartenberg, Guest Curator

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Front: Warren Sonbert in the 1960s  
All photographs ©Ascension Serrano, the Estate of Warren Sonbert.

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